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## CZECHOSLOVAKIA MOVES TO CUT BACK PARTY POWER

The new party first secretary, Alexander Dubcek, is relying on "democratization" of the party to secure his power. For the first time since the Communists took over in 1948, party central committee members and alternates, together with the central control and auditing commission, are exercising the political power which has theoretically been theirs all along. Inspired by their success in dumping Novotny and encouraged by Dubcek, these 200 people are enthusiastically helping to draft a "party action program" which will be presented at a central committee meeting reportedly scheduled for mid-March.

The program, as outlined in a communique from the party presidium, will be designed to "ensure" the central committee's continued dominance, to reinvigorate the top levels of the party with frequent infusions of capable men from the ranks, and to provide for "evaluation" of the performance of party functionaries. The program will provide for a new system of party appointments, thus breaking up the monopoly of Novotny's former henchmen. Individuals with posts in the party and government will have to choose one post or the other. A political atmosphere in which "freedom for criticism, and diversity of views" could flourish in the central committee would be guaranteed. Parliament would be given complete leadership of the government; electoral procedures would be changed to guarantee this.

Dubcek has begun making changes in the central party bu-

reaucracy which up to now has dominated both the central committee and the government. He has replaced the chiefs of departments responsible for military and security affairs, as well as for ideology, with people he trusts.

These developments are receiving unprecedented publicity and agitation for change is growing within the party. Local party units from nearly every important area of the country are demanding liberalization and a voice in the "democratization" process. Many old-time Communists, shunted aside after they carried off the bloodless coup in 1948, are adding respected voices to demands for a cut back in the party's power.

The same spirit animates those politically active among the general populace. Students want their own organization, separate from the officially supported mass youth organization. The mass youth organization in turn has been demanding that it cease being a mere arm of the party. Slovaks have demonstrated for fulfillment of economic promises. The Writers' Union has demanded reinstatement in the party of some of its members who were banned by Novotny for outspoken criticism. Economists are pressing for reform. Journalists are calling for an end to censorship.

Dubcek will begin to put his stamp on the government at a meeting of parliament scheduled to begin on 26 February. Conservative opposition to Dubcek's ideas is still strong, however, and the process of change may take longer than he has foreseen.

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EASTERN EUROPE

Dubcek Replaces Novotny as  
Party First Secretary in Czech-  
oslovakia

Antonin Novotny has been replaced as party first secretary by Alexander Dubcek but retains his less important position as president, at least for the time being. The new leadership may prove to be unstable.

Slovak leader Alexander Dubcek's elevation to first secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party appears to have been a last-minute compromise among various interest groups within the presidium and central committee at the party plenum ending 5 January.

[REDACTED] that he had seen a publicity spread which had been prepared on planning chief Oldrich Cernik, who was thought to have been a leading contender for Novotny's job.

Dubcek's election is unprecedented--no member of the Slovak minority has ever before held the top party job in Czechoslovakia. Dubcek was made chief of the party in Slovakia in 1963, as part of the country's belated de-Stalinization process. Under his rule the Slovaks have been in the vanguard of opposition to Novotny and his conservative policies.

Dubcek's position was probably somewhat strengthened with the expansion of the party presidium from ten to 14 members. The

four new presidium members, who were promoted over five candidate members of that body, have played relatively minor roles in national politics, but they do represent a regional balance. They were added to counterbalance the presence of Novotny and any of his potential supporters who remain in the party's ruling body.

The new men are experienced in some of Czechoslovakia's key economic problem areas. Their appointment and the communiqué of the central committee suggest that economic improvement will be the first order of business once the new regime completes its organization.

Other leadership changes, both in the party and government, are reportedly being considered. Premier Lenart may be replaced by Cernik when the parliament meets on 10 January. Conservative ideology chief Jiri Hendrych may also eventually go. Hendrych is said to have attempted to get on the anti-Novotny bandwagon during a December party meeting, but was told by other presidium members that it was too late and that in any case his record prevented this.

According to several reports, the government structure will be reorganized, although a picture of its new shape has not yet emerged.

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1 Soviet party chief Brezhnev made a special trip to Prague in early December after Moscow realized that serious trouble was brewing. His purpose was to assure himself that the situation was not getting out of hand rather than to attempt to dictate a solution. Although the Russians have been staunch supporters of Novotny during his long tenure and vice versa, they are doubtless more interested in

stability of the Czechoslovak regime than in Novotny's personal fortunes.

For the time being, there are not likely to be any basic shifts in Czechoslovak relations with Moscow, but there may be some moderation in Prague's attitude toward the West--particularly toward Germany.

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